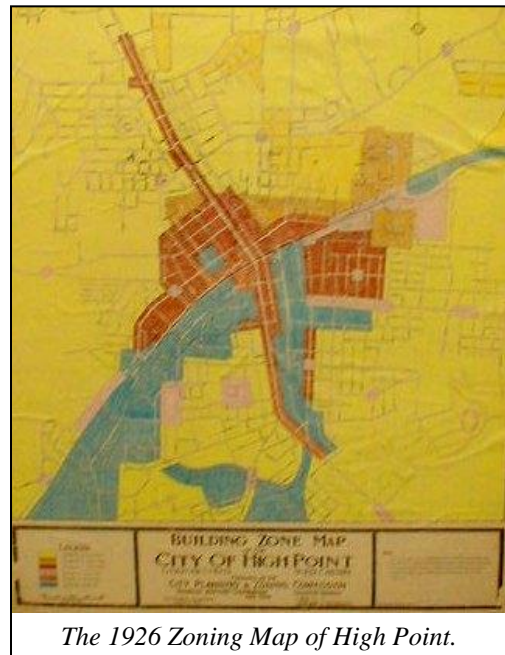




Introduction to Zoning

Zoning is a tool used by a town, city, or county government to help manage how the land within its borders is used. This is accomplished through the use of different types of districts, or zones, that create areas of separate land use. Zoning is a legal exercise of the “police power”, which is a term used to describe the right of government to regulate personal conduct and the use of land in order to promote the health, safety and general welfare of the public. In North Carolina the power to implement zoning has been granted by the State to all incorporated cities and towns (even the smallest towns), as well as to all counties. This does not mean that all local governments have to use zoning, but they have the legal authority to do so if they wish. While almost all of North Carolina’s cities and towns have chosen to implement zoning, there are more than a dozen counties in the state that have chosen not to.

In order for a city or county to implement zoning, it must first adopt a zoning ordinance and a zoning map. This can only be accomplished with a vote of approval from the elected officials (the town or city council, or county commissioners). If a city or town decides to use zoning, all of its land area must be zoned. The City of High Point first adopted zoning in 1926, and was one of the first communities in North Carolina to do so. Over the years the types and boundaries of zoning districts have changed many times. The City’s most recent complete revision of its zoning was adopted in 1992. Since then, there have been many amendments to both the zoning ordinance and the zoning map. As High Point continues to grow and change, our zoning ordinance and map will change as well.



The 1926 Zoning Map of High Point.

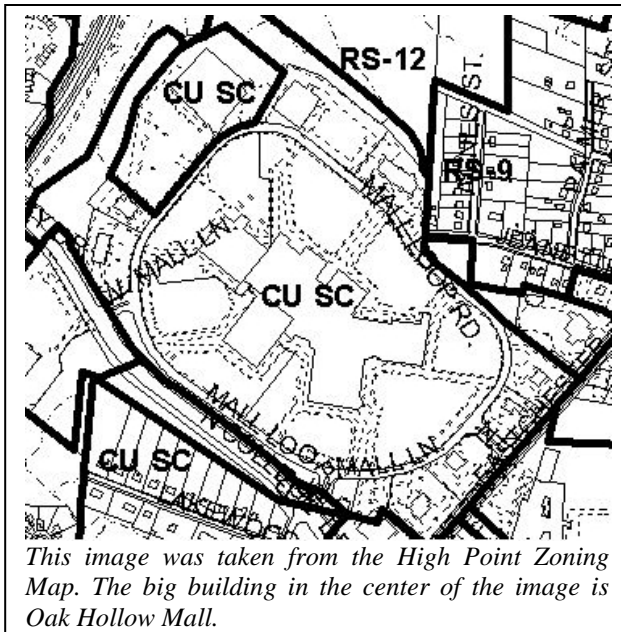
The Zoning Ordinance is a book of rules that deal with how land may be used, the placement

of structures upon the land, the size (bulk) and density of structures on the land, and other aspects related to the physical development of land such as parking, landscaping and signage. High Point's zoning ordinance is part of a group of regulations that are collectively called the Development Ordinance. The Development Ordinance also includes the City's subdivision rules and some local environmental rules.

Every zoning ordinance is unique to the community it serves. It is crafted by community leaders to help guide and control growth, to implement long-range planning goals and objectives, and is often tailored to address specific development issues that are important to the community.

Each community that adopts zoning determines how many and what types of zoning districts it will have. A large city may have dozens of different zoning districts, where a small town may have only a few. Zoning districts are generally referred to by the predominant land use type permitted within them, such as residential, commercial, office, industrial, etc. and a community may have several different districts in each type. There also can be mixed use districts, where different types of uses are encouraged to co-exist, such as office and residential uses.

The zoning map shows which zoning district an area or neighborhood is located in. For instance, the shopping mall shown on the zoning map below is located in High Point's Shopping Center, or SC zoning district. The neighborhoods east and north of the mall are located in Residential Single-Family, or RS zoning districts.



Many times a zoning district is customized by the placement of additional rules, called conditions, on the zoning district. When this is done, a conditional use zoning district is the result, and the letters CU are added to the zoning district designation. An example of this can be seen on this zoning map, as Oak Hollow Mall is located in a Conditional Use-Shopping Center (CU-SC) zoning district. The City's zoning map can be viewed on our Internet website by using the CHP Map application.

Since zoning can only be approved by the elected officials, it can only be changed or amended with their approval. A change to the wording, or text, of the zoning ordinance is called a zoning text amendment, while a change to the way a property is zoned, from one district to another, is called a zoning map amendment or a “rezoning”. When High Point adds new land to its jurisdiction, through a process known as annexation, the new land must be zoned by the City, which also requires a zoning map amendment. All decisions on text amendments and zoning map amendments take place following a public hearing held by City Council. Citizens who wish to voice their opinion regarding a particular zoning map or text amendment may do so at the public hearing.

Why do we have zoning? One of the main reasons is that zoning can help to protect existing neighborhoods by preventing the establishment of unwanted or incompatible land uses. This provides homeowners with a reasonable assurance that their neighborhood will contain, for example, houses, parks, churches and schools, not large stores, restaurants or noisy factories. In this way, zoning helps to stabilize and even enhance property values. By regulating density and the location of land uses, zoning can ensure that growth and development occurs in an orderly manner that is compatible with the City’s ability to provide services, such as police and fire protection, and public utilities. Also, zoning can set minimum design standards that help ensure that new development reflects the community’s values and the vision it has for its future.



One of the planners with the City of High Point helps a citizen find zoning information for a property in High Point.

For more information on this topic we suggest the book Introduction to Zoning (Second Edition, 2001) by David W. Owens (Published by the Institute of Government, UNC-Chapel Hill).